MITHILĀ AND NEPAL

By

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The reign of Harisiṁha, the last Karṇāṭa ruler of Mithilā, has attracted for a long time the attention of scholars, and chiefly Prof. R.K. Choudhary was quite active in this field. To his unflagging zeal we owe the discovery of some new material and repeated critical appraisals of all the available evidence. I myself contributed some data a few years ago;[1] but at that time it was for me a mere sideline. Prof. Choudhary's latest articles[2] have prompted me to take up that line of research again. If I felt compelled to disagree with him on several points, let me assure my learned colleague that none more than I is aware of the great importance of his contribution to the history of Mithilā.

On the whole, we agree on the reconstruction of the Karṇāṭa genealogy after Nānyadeva. But we differ rather widely on the chronological set-up, partly because Prof. Choudhary has built his system on a misunderstanding of the data I had made available in 1958.

In Prof. Choudhary's opinion,[3] Rāmasiṁha of Mithilā reigned between 1227-1283; I had suggested an approximate date of C. 1205-1245,[4] giving my reasons, which I am not going to repeat here. Both of Prof. Choudhary's dates are due to misunderstandings. For the date of 1227 he quotes the authority of the Tibetan traveller C'os-rje-dpal, according to whom Rāma siṁha of Tirhut would have ascended the throne seven years before C'os-rje-dpal's passage through Tirhut. I am unable to find this statement in the text of C'os-rje-dpal as published and translated by the late G. Roerich;[5] the biography says nothing of the sort and the date of 1227 rests on no authority.

The date of 1283, according to Prof. Choudhary, is that of the

1. Mediaeval History of Nepal, Rome 1958.
2. Harisimhadeva of Mithilā, in ABORI 42 (1961), pp. 123-140 (issued in 1963 only), The later Karnatas of Mithilā and Nepal, in JBRS 46 (1960), pp. 16-26 (issued in 1964 only).
3. Harisimhadeva of Mithilā, p. 127.
4. Mediaeval History of Nepal, p 193.
5. G. Roerich, Biography of Dharmasvāmin, Patna 1959. It is a pity that the text is so full of misprints and the translation is none too reliable; see J. W. De Jong, in Indo-Irarian Journal 6 (1962), pp. 167-173.

accession of Harisiṁha as given in the Kaisher *vaṁśāvalī.*[6] This assertion is based on the final portion of the fragmentary manuscript of the Kaisher *vaṁśāvalī*, as published in *Mediaeval History of Nepal*, p. 217. The actual text is as follows : *tatsunu* [*Ha*] *rasiṁha deva nṛpatiḥ Kārṇṇāṭa-cūḍāmaṇiḥ* ॥ *bāṇābdhiyu* [*gmaśa*] *śi 1205* (sic) *samvat Śākavarṣe pauṣasya sukla navamī ra* [*visunuvare............*]; here the manuscript is broken off. This is simply the usual chronogram about Harisiṁha's entry in the hills after leaving Tirhut, a chronogram current in Mithilā and preserved in many sources. *Bāṇābdhiyugmaśaśi* corresponds of course to 1245 Śaka, and the number 1205 is just a mistaken equivalence given by the author of the *vaṁśāvalī*, or more likely inserted by some ignorant scribe.[7] So there is no date for Rāmasiṁha in the Kaisher *vaṁśāvalī*, much less in the Tucci *vaṁśāvalī* or anywhere else in the Nepalese sources. I think that the available evidence supports my dates better than those suggested by Prof. Choudhary.

Vīrasiṁha, whom a colophon mentions as reigning in Tirhut in C. 1260 A.D.,[8] is believed by Prof. Choudhary to be ruling in some other part of Tirhut and possibly to belong to the line of Malladeva. I am not competent to discuss the latter suggestion, but I definitely cannot accept the first one. According to the colophon, Vīrasiṁha reigned at Śālmalī-Pāṭaka. This is clearly identical with Pāṭaka which was the capital of the second Karṇāṭa king Gaṅgadeva or Gāṅgeyadeva (C. 1145-1175) according to a colophon;[9] with Pa-ta which was the capital of Ramasiṁha (C. 1205-1245) according to C'os-rje-dpal;[10] with......dha-Pāṭaka of the inscription of king Narasiṁhadeva of 1453;[11] and perhaps even with Patanapuri which was the capital of Harisiṃha (C. 1279-1324). This Pāṭaka may or may not be identical with Simraongarh; that is a point which must be left for Mithilā scholars to decide. What is relevant here is the fact that Vīrasimha did not reign in some outlying portion of Tirhut, but in the same capital as all the great kings of the Karṇaṭa dynasty.

Without giving the matter more attention than it deserves, I shall remark in passing that Prof. Choudhary misunderstands me on two points

6. Incidentally, in the following lines Prof. Choudhary attributes that date to the Tucci Sanskrit vamsāvali, which, however, gives no date at all.
7. This was already pointed out in Mediaeval History of Nepal, p. 8, a passage which must have escaped Prof. Choudhary.
8. Mediaeval History of Nepal, p. 195.
9. Literature listed in Mediaeval History of Nepal, p. 192.
10. G. Roerich, Biography of Dharmasvāmin, pp. 58-59, 100-101.
11. K. P. Jayaswal, Kandahā inscription of king Narasimhadeva, in JBORS 20 (19`4), pp. 15-19; for the correct date (S. 1375) see Upendra Thakur, History of Mithilā, Darbhanga 1956, pp. 326-327.

of minor importance. Firstly, Ripumalla and Saṅgrāmamalla have nothing to do with the Mallas of Nepal;[12] they were kings of the Khasiyā state in Western Nepal, which included also the greater part of Western Tibet.[13] Secondly, I never gave out as a fact[14] that Jagatsiṃha was a son of Harisiṃha. That was a guess from my part, which fits very well with the known facts, but must await confirmation. It is a working hypothesis and nothing else, and it is certainly unsafe to construct genealogies on it.

The most important point on which I completely differ with the opinions of Professors Choudhary and R. C. Majumdar is the role played by Harisiṁha in Nepal. My learned colleagues still give full credit to the Pratāpa Malla inscription of the 17th century and to the Wright *Vaṁśāvalī* of the early 19th century, which make Harisiṁha the ancestor of the later Malla kings. In their opinion Nānyadeva established his suzerainty over Nepal, and Harisiṁha renewed it and ruled there after his retreat from Tirhut; and the kings of the colophons, thererore, were vassal rulers under Karṇāṭa suzerainty.

May I be allowed to recall a fundamental principle of historical criticism, which is taken for granted all over the world : earlier sources deserve better credence than later sources. To put it more precisely : if the earlier sources unanimously agree in establishing a fact, their evidence is to be preferred to whatever later sources have to say. This basic principle has been violated in this instance.

The contemporary sources for Nepalese history of the 14th century are the fairly numerous colophons, several inscriptions, the Gopāl (or Bendall) *vaṁśāvalī*, and the Kaisher *vaṁśāvalī;* both these chronicles belong to the end of that same 14th century. Their unanimous evidence shows that a lineage of kings ruled in Nepal, whom we call Malla because of their name endings. Of these kings we have dates and partly also the genealogy. They bore the full royal style *Mahārājādhirājā parameśvara paramabhaṭṭāraka*, which excludes a foreign suzerainty. The Pratāpa Malla inscription, which is later by three centuries, and the still more modern Wright *vaṁśāvalī* have no weight against the evidence of two ancient chronicles and of several scores of colophons and inscriptions. I pointed out long ago the reason why the later sources fabricated a royal genealogy, which is without authority and palpably false; the Mallas

12. As is implied in Harisimhadeva of Mithilā, p. 132.
13. G. Tucci, Preliminary report on two scientific expeditions in Nepal, Rome 1956, pp. 43-130.
14. As taken for granted in Harisimhadeva of Mithilā, p. 134, and Later Karnātas, p.19.

of Kathmandu in the 17th century claimed to be descended through Jayasthitimalla from Harisiṁha, and accordingly adjusted their genealogy (and incidentally the whole history of Nepal).

If we base ourselves on the contemporary sources, as we are bound to do in correct historical method, the picture is as follows. Harisiṁha and his minister Caṇḍeśvara invaded Nepal in 1289 or 1291 and again in 1311 ; the latter came once more in 1314 and raided the valley as far as the shrine of Paśupati, without conquering it permanently. When Harisiṁha was expelled by the Muslims from Tirhut, he fled towards Nepal; this happened in 1323 according to the Mithilā chronogram (which date cannot be correct) or at the beginning of 1325 according to the Muslim sources. There is no probability, and not a shred of contemporary evidence, in favour of a conquest of the valley by him after his flight from Tirhut,

When we are told that "the mysterious connection of the Karṇāṭas and the Mallas remains to be explored further till we get some definite evidence to reject the Karṇaṭa authority in Nepal altogether",[15] I am afraid this is tackling the matter at the wrong end. When the contemporary colophons and inscriptions consistently ignore the existence of such an authority, the onus of the proof lies with the supporters of that contention.

Harisiṃha's end was quite in keeping with the picture of a helpless fugitive, which I believe him to have been. It is described in a few lines by the Gopāla (or Bendall) *vaṁśāvalī*. In 1958 I misunderstood that passage, and I am sorry if any scholar was misled thereby; to my excuse I can only say that the old Newari of that venerable chronicle is still very difficult to penetrate, even to modern Newars. What follows is a faithful transcription of the relevant passage in the original manuscript in the Bir Library at Kathmandu (f. 46a—b) :[16]

स ४४६ माघ शुदि ३ तिरहूतिः हरशिंहु राज्जासन मिह्लोसन तासत्र गही टो ढीलीस तुरक याके वंङ रायत मानालपं थमु भगु गन याङ वस्यं शिमरावन गड्ढ भङ्ग याङ तिरहूतिया राजा महाथ आदिन समस्त वडङ व्यसन वंग्व टों ग्वलछिनो लिन्दु'बिज्ञ ववः ग्वलछिनो राजगाम द्वलखा धारे वंग्व ।। टिंपोतस राजा हरसिंह तो शिक थ्वस

15. Later Karnātas, p. 22.
16. The edition by Yogi Naraharinath in Himavat Samskriti, 1 (2016 V. S.), p. 19a, is rather incorrect The "vamsāvali in possession of Mr. Regmi" mentioned by Prof. Choudhary, Later Karnātas, p. 18, seems to be a recent copy of the Gopāla vamsāvali.

वाय नो मश्राथ नो उभय बंधि यंङा कूत्तन उओङाव हंग्व राजगामया मभी भारो धायान समस्त धन कासन ॥

A translation can only be a tentative one.[17] The first two lines are very obscure, as several expressions are utterly unknown to me.[18]

In 446 N. S., Māgha *śudi* 3 (January 7th, 1326 A. D.) Raja Harasiṃha of Tirhut.........to the Turks of Delhi.........Simraongarh was broken (stormed). The king of Tirhut, the Mahātha and the rest, all of them fled; some of them ran after them (? : *linduṃbila*), and some went as far as Rajgaon and Dolkha.[19] Afterwards (read : *lipotasa*) king Harisimha died; and the man called Mājhi Bhāro of Rajgaon, having treacherously arrested and carried off as prisoners both his son and the Mahātha, seized all their wealth,"

This was the sad end of Harisiṃha. He was no conqueror, no ruler retreating to an outlying portion of his kingdom, but a landless refugee dying in the hills,[20] while his family and retainers were seized and plundered by a petty local nobleman. The authority for these events is unimpeachable and the picture it gives fits with all the known facts : the defeat and flight of Harisiṁha and the unimpeded rule of the Mallas in full independence. After this, the legend of Harisimha's and his descendants' rule in Nepal must disappear from sober history. Only when *Nepalese* colophons or inscriptions of the 14th century give evidence to the contrary, will it be possible to re-open the question.

If my working hypothesis about Jagatsiṃha of Tirhut being the son of Harisiṃha be true, then it means that he retrieved the utterly fallen fortunes of his house by a brilliant marriage, and through that marriage only. Harisiṃha bequeathed to his descendants neither power nor riches nor influence, but merely a high social standing and nothing else.

As to the Chinese evidence, it is rather curious how Prof. Choudhary[21] can still accept the old idea of S. Levi that the descendants of Harisiṃha were recognized as kings of Nepal by the Chinese. Levi did not know of the Itham Bahal inscription of 1382 A. D., which shows clearly

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17. Prof. Choudhary's translation is more in the nature of a summary.
18. I express my sincere thanks to the Newar scholar Baikunth Prasad Lacoul, who kindly gave me his advice on this text.
19. To the south-east of the Nepal valley.
20. The tale of his death at Umāgrāma in the Darbhanga district (Later Karnātas, pp. 18-19) seems to be a more local legend.
21. Later Karnātas, p. 19.

enough that Madana Rāma and his son Śaktisiṃha (Ma-ta-na Lo-mo and Sha-ti-hsin-ko of the Chinese) descended from Aneka Rāma and thus belonged to a noble Nepalse family.[22]

Lastly, I would like to clear the field of two other alleged references to Karṇāṭa rule in Nepal. Prof. Choudhary states that "the Patna inscription of 1413 A. D. informs us that the sons of Jayasthitimalla were partners with the Karṇāṭas at Bhatgaon".[23] Something is wrong in this reference. The only inscription of 1413 is the one in the compound of Paśupati Nāth.[24] It refers only to the sons and grandsons of Jayasthitimalla and gives not the slightest hint about the Karṇāṭas.

Another so-called descendant of Harisiṃha in Nepal has to be eliminated. Prof. Choudhary has pointed out that "in a four-act *Rāmāyaṇa* by Dharmagupta we get some description about a king named Yuthasiṃhadeva......From his title, he seems to have belonged to the race of Harisiṃha and from his worshipping of Sikharanagram he seems to have dominions in Nepal".[25] This has nothing to do with the dynasty of Harisiṁha. Śikharanagara or Śikharapurī is the Sanskrit name of Pharphing in the Nepal valley; and Yuthasiṃha is almost certainly identical with Jaya Yodhasiṃha Deva, who along with his brothers appears in a Śikharapurī (Pharphing) inscription of 1407 A. D. as a vassal of Jayadharmamalla of Nepal.[26] It was apparently a family of local barons.

22. Mediaeval History of Nepal, p. 146.
23. Later Karnātas, p. 20.
24. First published in Ind. Ant. 1880, pp. 183-184; cf. Mediaeval History of Nepal, p.155.
25. Later Karnātas, pp. 22-23.
26. Mediaeval History of Nepal, p. 144.